



Fatal occupational injuries to independent workers

By Stephen Pegula and Matt Gunter

In recent years, the nature of the worker–employer dynamic has changed in many ways. One change is a shift from a continuous work agreement with no foreseeable end to a relationship that is finite and that encompasses a single-task, short-term contract, or freelance work. The rise of this so-called “gig economy” appears in the growth of peer-to-peer ridesharing applications on smartphones and the emergence of online marketplaces that match freelance labor to specific computer-based job tasks.¹ One trait most of these services share is their ability to match consumer needs with available workers in real time.

These workers, henceforth called independent workers, face unique challenges in terms of workplace safety. Independent workers are considered in current academic literature to be an at-risk group because of their fluid employment situation, which potentially puts them at greater risk for poorer workplace safety and health outcomes.²

Employer is a definition BLS uses. This is a hover-over test. [Consumer unit](#) is another term used by BLS. This is a click on test for consumer unit.

A sentence that this term [base period](#) has a term for click on.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Current Population Survey (CPS) has published employment data on contingent/alternative workers, which are defined similarly (but not identically) to independent workers in the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI), both in the past and, more recently, in June 2018.³ However, BLS has not published any data on the workplace injury and illness experience of independent workers until now. The CFOI identified 662 fatal occupational injuries among independent workers in 2016 and 613 in 2017.

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GLOSSARY

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